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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT G/TIP FOR WENDY OWEN

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SUBJECT: UTAH AG SEEKS ALLY IN B.C. AGAINST FDLS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

11. (U) Summary: On December 8, 2005, Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff met in Vancouver with British Columbia Attorney General Wally Oppal. Shurtleff traveled here to discuss the possibility of mutual cooperation in matters related to the Fundamentalist Church of Latter Day Saints (FLDS). Shurtleff later met with the Consul General and selected Consulate staff to offer us a readout on his meeting. The attorneys general appear to have laid a firm basis for future cooperation. Shurtleff had a full schedule in Vancouver, appearing on talk radio and meeting with an influential women's civic organization, the editorial board of The Vancouver Sun and with other local contacts. His presence drew out the influential excommunicated FDLS bishop Winston Blackmore, who staged a successful media campaign of his own. End Summary.

12. (U) Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff told us that his discussion with Wally Oppal focused on crimes against women and children. He said he presented Oppal with a large book his office had produced on legal techniques for dealing with crimes thought to be associated with the FDLS such as sexual assault on minors, trafficking in women, and spousal abuse. Shurtleff characterized prosecutions against FDLS members as extremely difficult to obtain due to the reluctance of witnesses to cooperate with police. He thought Oppal was willing to prosecute such crimes in British Columbia if witnesses would step forward.

13. (U) Shurtleff also wants Oppal's cooperation in the search for and possible apprehension of Warren Jeffs, leader of the FDLS. Jeffs has been parts unknown since Arizona issued warrants for his arrest on criminal charges dealing with assisting in sexual assaults on minors through arranging "celestial marriages" of girls in their early teens. Jeffs is also the subject of civil warrants in Utah in a case brought by his nephew for sodomy and rape. Shurtleff said Oppal had agreed to look into formalizing a mutual legal assistance agreement with the State of Utah that would allow enforcement in British Columbia of certain types of orders of Utah courts. Execution of Utah arrest warrants and even subpoena powers were also discussed in their meeting.

14. (SBU) When asked, Shurtleff gave us a detailed breakdown of what he hopes to obtain by his actions in relation to the FDLS. He said he hopes "the United Effort Plan (UEP) will become a nullity." The UEP is the FDLS trust fund, estimated to be worth \$130 million, which has been placed in court-ordered receivership by Utah courts. Shurtleff hopes the trust fund will devolve back to FDLS members through grants of land and money by the court-appointed trustee. Shurtleff also hopes to obtain Jeffs' arrest and conviction. The Utah AG concluded, however, that polygamy will continue to exist.

15. (SBU) Other areas of interest to Shurtleff include whether FDLS members can be found guilty of trafficking in people, whether child labor laws are being breached by the cult, and whether any of the businesses associated with Bountiful are hiring illegal aliens. He said Oppal had concluded after investigation that no one in the Bountiful commune was guilty of welfare fraud.

16. (U) The Consul General and Consular Section Chief pointed out that USG interest in the FLDS issue is based on our concern that the Bountiful community under a desperate Jeffs might take an apocalyptic route similar to Jonestown, that US citizens in the community are routinely crossing the Canada/US border undocumented and uninspected, that trafficking in people may be occurring, and that the operation of the commune appears to be producing disadvantaged US citizens (people with almost no formal education and incapable of functioning in a free society).

17. (U) Winston Blackmore came to Vancouver and succeeded in gaining much of the spotlight. He sat in on the Utah AG's press conference, having obtained press credentials as a reporter for the website he operates. He and four of his wives insinuated themselves into a meeting the University Women had organized with Shurtleff. The flamboyant bishop also gave his own press conference while in town, denying all allegations of child abuse at Bountiful. His wives dutifully proclaimed their satisfaction with polygamy and claimed no knowledge of child abuse. None of Blackmore's 102 children attended the events.

18. (U) According to local press reports when asked by a reporter whether he would encourage any of his flock to come forward with information regarding child abuse, Blackmore said "I certainly wouldn't encourage them not to go forward." Media coverage of the day's events was extensive, with Blackmore getting more ink than Shurtleff in The Province. The Vancouver Sun covered the story on its front page.

19. (U) Comment: Shurtleff hopes to gain in Wally Oppal an active partner against the FLDS for two reasons: the Utah AG needs BC support to enforce Utah's seizure of the UEP assets in Canada and there are credible reports that Warren Jeffs has visited British Columbia several times this year, collecting funds and continuing to join FDLS members in "celestial weddings." Whether Oppal will cooperate with Shurtleff or will take any independent action against FLDS in British Columbia remains to be seen.

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